



## NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

**PROJECT TITLE** CAL FIRE Academy – California National Guard Military Helicopter Manager (MHEM) Training

**PROJECT LOCATION** CAL FIRE Academy  
 4501 State Highway 104  
 Ione, CA 95640-9705

**COUNTY** Amador

**LEAD AGENCY** CAL FIRE

**CONTACT** Kevin Locke, Division Chief

**ADDRESS** CalFire Academy  
 4501 State Highway 104  
 Ione, CA 95640-9705

**PHONE** (209) 274-5505

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The project is a training exercise between the California National Guard and the fire agencies involved in the Interagency Military Helicopter Firefighting Program. This is required annual training under the inter-agency agreement. The purpose is to prepare both fire agency personnel and National Guard flight crews in the complex wildland aerial firefighting operations. Furthermore, this training is designed to bring the flight crews together with the fire personnel to further develop teamwork and crew cohesion necessary for a safe, effective, efficient firefighting resource.

The training begins with classroom review on Friday April 12<sup>th</sup> with flight operations at Pardee Reservoir on Saturday and Sunday April 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of the flight operations is to bring realism to the training arena by establishing a mock wildland fire scenario complete with Helibase, Helispot, and air-borne Helicopter Coordinator at a mock-fire scene near the reservoir. Both the Helibase and Helispot will be approximately ½ to 1 acre in size and will not disturb or alter the existing soil. The air distance between the Helibase and the Helispot is approximately 8.33 miles. The Helibase is located at the CAL FIRE Academy in Ione. The Helibase and the training site are located at Pardee Reservoir, which is managed by East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD).

Pardee Reservoir will be used as a water source for bucket operations where water is dropped on targets identified within, and along the mock-fire perimeter. Flight operations begin after a 0800 briefing at the Helibase. On Saturday the flight operations will continue from roughly 0900 to 1600. Sunday’s flight operations will start at 0900 and end at approximately 1500. Helicopters will be operating continuously during these time periods and will be either making water drops or flying back to the Helibase to refuel or take care of maintenance issues. There will be fuel trucks, emergency vehicles, water tender, and support vehicles at the Helibase site. The Helispot will only be used for emergencies or to change crew members. There will be one emergency vehicle and limited support staff at the Helispot. There will be between 30 to 40 fire service trainees and 50 to 60 California National Guard trainees taking part in this exercise.

The water dropping exercises will involve Blackhawk Helicopters (UH-60). The Blackhawk Helicopter is considered a Type I asset under the Incident Command System and has a bucket capacity of 700 gallons. Other helicopters are used in a support roll as the Helicopter Coordinator (Helco) platform and for transportation. This year there will be three or four UH-60s used for water dropping, two UH-72 helicopters used for helco, and one UH 1H for transport/aerial photographs. It is anticipated that there will be a total of 6 or 7 helicopters used in the training exercise.

EBMUD has information listed in their Mokelumne Watershed Master Plan which is located at the website <http://www.ebmud.com/environment/habitats> . There are 4 documents titled Master Plan, parts 1-4 which covers the EBMUD property which will be used during the training exercise. Information from their Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Mokelumne Watershed Master Plan were reviewed during this scoping process for this project. EBMUD has issued a 2013 Watershed Entry Permit, which has certain conditions that the permittee (CAL FIRE) must adhere to while on District property. The conditions in the EBMUD permit are based on their EIR and Mokelumne Watershed Master Plan.



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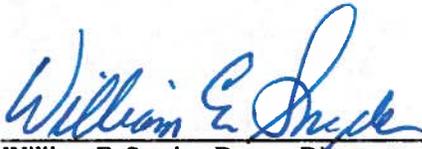
**EXEMPTION STATUS**

- Categorical Exemption Type/Section: Class 4 §15304 Minor Alterations to Land
- Statutory Exemption (state code section):
- Ministerial (§21080(b)(1); 15268)
- Declared Emergency (§21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
- Emergency Project (§21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))

**REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT**

This project fits within the descriptions of Class 4 Categorical Exemptions to CEQA and will not result in a significant impact upon the environment. Prior to making this determination, CalFire staff completed a limited environmental review to confirm that no unusual conditions or sensitive resources exist at the project site. Field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. The Department has concluded that no significant environmental impact would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forestland/timberland, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, or to utilities and service systems. Documentation of this environmental review is on file at the CalFire Academy and at CalFire Headquarters in Sacramento.

**DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING**

  
 William E. Snyder, Deputy Director      4/2/13  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

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APR 02 2013

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